

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 10654

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NI, US
SUBJECT: DAILY TIMES ATTACKS ON GARBA

REF: (A) USIS/LAGOS 121610Z SEP 77, (B) LAGOS 10246, (C) LAGOS
10112, (D) LAGOS 9707, (E) LAGOS 10340

1. DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THAT SEPTEMBER 12 DAILY TIMES (DT)
ATTACK ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG (REF A) IS THE THIRD DT
STATEMENT IN THAT VEIN OF LATE. HOWEVER, THIS LATEST
EFFORT IS EVEN MORE DIRECTLY AIMED AT FONMIN GARBA. ACCORDING
TO DT, GARBA'S COMMENTS ON YOUNG IN INTERVIEW WITH NIGERIAN
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (NIIA) DIRECTOR AKINYEMI
"DESTROYED" THE SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION
GARBA HAS MADE TO NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY. DT REJECTS
GARBA'S PRAISE OF YOUNG AS A PERSON AND ADDS THAT GARBA
"WORSENEDED THE WHOLE THING BY MAKING A SPEECH ADVOCATING
OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMERICAN POSITION." IN A PARTING
SHOT, DT WONDERS WHETHER MEA COMMISSIONER IS "THE
COMMISSIONER FOR MR. YOUNG."

2. COMMENT: BOTH THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DT ATTACKS
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ON GARBA ARE FAR FROM CLEAR. HOWEVER, THERE APPEAR TO BE TWO
POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS:

3. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE DT STATEMENTS ARE ONLY A PART
OF THE NIGERIAN EFFORT IN RECENT WEEKS TO RIGHT THE BLANCE IN
NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE RECENT WARM PRAISE FOR AMBASSADOR
YOUNG AND SUPPORT FOR THE UK/US INITIATIVE IN RHODESIA. CLEARLY,

THERE ARE THOS IN THE GOVERNMENT, IN THE PRESS, AND IN PUBLIC LIFE GENERALLY, I.E., NIA DIRECTOR AKINYENI, WHO FEEL THAT THE TILT TOWARD THE USG WAS EITHER WRONG OR AT THE LEAST EXCESSIVE. ASSUMING A CERTAIN LOOSENESS IN CONTROL OF THE PRESS, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE GENERAL CAMPAIGN COULD HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO TOUCH GARBA, PARTICULARLY THE PARTS OF THE CAMPAIGN CONDUCTED BY SOME JOURNALISTS WHO FELT THE TILT TOWARD THE USG TO BE WRONG FROM THE BEGINNING.

4. ALTERNATIVELY, THE DT STATEMENTS COULD BE AN ORCHESTRATED ATTACK AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT GARBA WHICH HAS BEEN UNLEASHED AT THIS TIME BECAUSE IT CAN BE CONVENIENTLY FITTED INTO THE GENERAL ATTACK ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG AND USG POLICY. IF SO, THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR SUCH AN ATTACK, EITHER FROM WITHIN THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL OR OPPONENTS OF GARBA AND HIS POLICIES WITHIN THE PRESS. THREE FACTS ARE NOTEWORTHY IN ANALYSING THE SITUATION. FIRST, THE ATTACKS HAVE BEEN REPETITIVE AND INCREASINGLY CONCENTRATED. SECOND, UNTIL SEPTEMBER 16 THEY APPEARED ONLY IN THE DT (SEE SEPTTEL). THIRD, WE BELIEVE THAT DT MANAGING DIRECTOR COLE WAS MOVED FROM THE CABINET OFFICE TO THE DT TO PUT DIRECTION AND CONTROL INTO THE PAPER AND IS CLOSE TO BOTH YAR "ADUA AND DANJUMA IN THE SMC. AT A MINIMUM IT APPEARS NO ONE ON THE SMC FEELS SUFFICIENTLY PROTECTIVE OF GARBA TO CALL OFF THE ATTACKS. IF THE DOGS WERE DELIBERATELY UNLEASHED ON GARBA, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DEDUCE WHO EXACTLY IS RESPONSIBLE. IT IS CLEAR THAT GARBA, LIKE OBASANJO (REF E), IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH SUPPORT
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FOR THE UK/US INITIATIVE IN RHODESIA IN PARTICULAR AND IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN GENERAL. IF THAT INITIATIVE SHOULD FAIL, THIS SUPPORT COULD PROVIDE A CONVENIENT CROSS UPON WHICH GARBA'S MANY ENEMIES COULD CRUCIFY HIM -- AND THAT MAY BE THE MESSAGE IN THE DT ATTACKS.
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